EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Most of us have more to do than time to do it. Do you ever feel like you are giving your time and attention to others and there isn't enough left over for yourself? It is often difficult to draw lines that create space for ourselves.

Healthy people establish clear boundaries using effective communication, and they do so without guilt. If you are giving too much of yourself to others, first be honest with yourself about changes you need to make—*and then make them*.

An example: I realized that I had to give up a volunteer commitment on Tuesday evenings. I had to let the organizer, Joe, know I was no longer available. When I imagined communicating with Joe—someone I value and didn't want to let down—all kinds of feelings came up. I had to get comfortable with stepping down and communicating my decision to Joe. Practicing difficult conversations can be very useful. You can practice with a friend, a therapist, or in the mirror. It really does help to be prepared and confident in your decision and delivery of it.

In conveying your boundaries to others, it is important that you communicate effectively.

Example of effective communication:

I feel overwhelmed when you ask me to be there on Tuesdays. I need us to agree on the days I will volunteer and Tuesday can no longer be one of them.

Compare that to this ineffective message:

You are making volunteering very stressful. I do not want to be the only one who shows up on Tuesdays.

Relinquishing a volunteering role might not bring up as many feelings as a conflict between you and a life partner yet again it might. Regardless, we recommend you practice to ensure you feel confident and get the best result.

If you often say "yes" when you want to say "no," identifying, establishing, honoring, and defending your boundaries is highly important for your well-being—mental and otherwise. Here are six ideas that will help you create healthy boundaries:

1. Know that sometimes you just have to say *no*. And you have the right to do that.
2. Be honest. If you keep saying *yes* when you want to say *no*, consider seeking help from a therapist or other trusted person.
3. Get in touch with why you tend to feel bad or apologize when you are doing what is best for you.
4. Focus on what you are learning. You may experience some uncomfortable moments when you start to establish boundaries. Realize that these uncomfortable moments are "learning experiences."
5. If you stretch your capacities, you are growing. Growth toward more personal effectiveness is a positive thing even when the work feels tough.
6. Understand that healthy boundaries are essential for a life well lived. Honoring yourself by addressing your own needs allows you to be there for others more effectively.

Setting boundaries can be life-changing in a marvelous way.

What boundaries do you need to set? Do you let fear of uncomfortable conversations keep you from establishing limits? What steps do you need to take to responsibly set boundaries?